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**LEADING CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS DENOUNCE PROPOSITION 77
Voting Rights Advocates Join Together in Calling Upon Californians to Vote No on Redistricting Initiative in Favor of True Redistricting Reform**

Los Angeles and Sacramento, California – The Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), the League of Women Voters of California (LWVC), and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) announced today their joint opposition to Proposition 77, the redistricting initiative that calls for mid-decade redistricting, shifts the responsibility for drawing legislative district boundaries from the state legislature to a panel of three retired judges, and requires passage of a statewide ballot measure before new district lines can become permanent every decade.

“Proposition 77 fails to achieve true redistricting reform,” stated Steven J. Reyes, Staff Attorney at MALDEF. “Proposition 77 unwisely entrusts the task of drawing legislative boundaries for 36 million Californians with three retired judges who cannot reflect the racial/ethnic and gender diversity in this state and who cannot be held accountable for their actions.” Reyes noted that if the Proposition 77 proponents were truly committed to reform, they would have opened up the process to more Californians and not created more barriers to public participation. Earlier this year, MALDEF and APALC released a “Model Redistricting Act” that outlined some of its vision of reform using a citizen-based redistricting commission.

Proposition 77 would require a harmful mid-decade round of redistricting. Commented Stewart Kwoh, Executive Director of APALC, “If the mid-decade redistricting is conducted based on outdated data from the 2000 census, the redistricting will ignore three million new Californians.” Proposition 77 also does not promote fair representation and would harm the interests of community groups. Stated Eugene Lee, Staff Attorney in APALC’s Voting Rights Project, “The panel established by Proposition 77 would not be required to consider essential community information in drawing boundaries. In 2001, this community information was vital to ensuring that minority communities had a voice in the redistricting process.”

Added Jacqueline Jacobberger, president of the LWVC, “The League of Women Voters of California seeks reform that will increase the accountability of our elected officials. For eight months this year, the League, APALC, MALDEF and other groups urged the legislature to negotiate a compromise bill to enact redistricting reform that implements an open, transparent redistricting process and uses fair standards for drawing boundaries. Noting that Proposition 77 fails to achieve this reform, Jacobberger continued, “We agree with others who have called for reform of the redistricting process. However, it would be disastrous to change the process simply for the sake of change, and adopt a proposal that is flawed.”

APALC, the League of Women Voters of California and MALDEF call upon Californians to reject Proposition 77 and call upon legislators and the Governor to work together next year to pass legislation that will implement true redistricting reform. Their joint position paper on Proposition 77 is available on the Internet at <http://apalc.org/pdf/prop77pos.pdf>.

APALC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for civil rights, providing legal services and education, and building coalitions to positively influence and impact Asian Pacific Americans and to create a more equitable and harmonious society. APALC is affiliated with the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium in Washington, DC.

The League of Women Voters of California is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

A national nonprofit organization founded in 1968, MALDEF promotes and protects the rights of Latinos through advocacy, community education and outreach, leadership development, higher education scholarships and when necessary, through the legal system.

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